

# Leadership Intent for Outdoor Recreation Rocky Mountain Region



**April 2015**







*Outdoor recreation ranks today as one of the major resources or utilities of the National Forests, not because of anything the government has done to facilitate or increase this form of use, but because of the demonstrated belief of several millions of people that Forests offer a broad and varied field of recreational opportunity.*

— USDA FOREST SERVICE, *Report of the Forester*, 1922

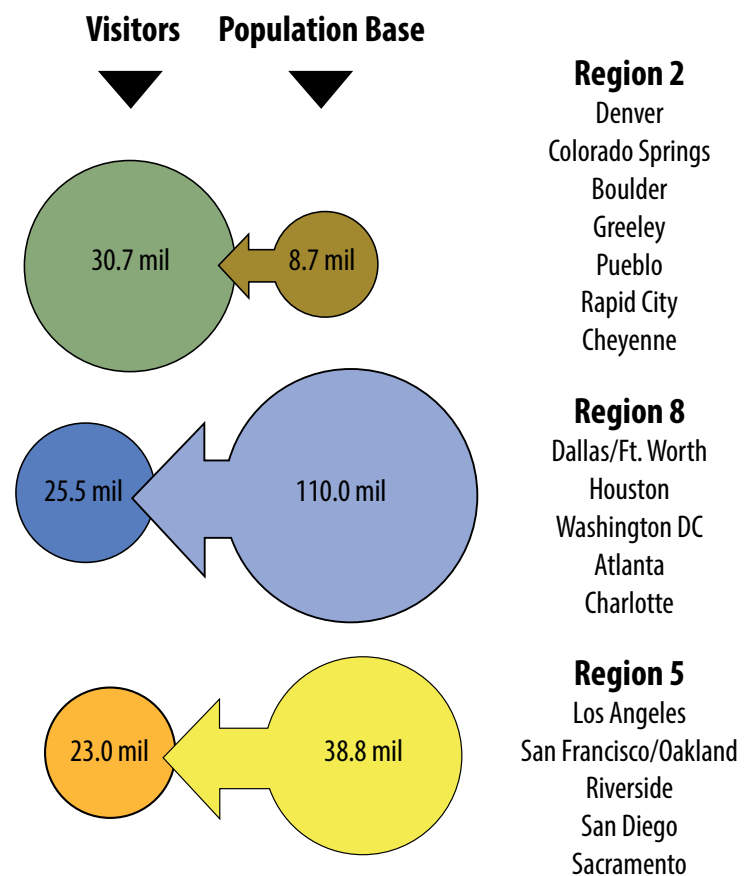
*We take great pride in our legacy, skilled workforce, and the sense of place that makes the Rocky Mountain Region special. Our priority is to manage and provide recreation opportunities based on collaborative communication, strategic partnerships, and innovative thinking that will ultimately shape the recreation program through the 21st century. As the Rocky Mountain Regional Leadership Team, we embrace and support this Recreation Intent.*

## OUR STORY

Over the years, changing and challenging demands have influenced our recreation management practices. From the beginning of Forest Service recreation management in 1919 with the early design works of Arthur Carhart in Squirrel Creek Canyon, to the Cradle of Wilderness at Trapper's Lake, to development of the 10th Mountain Division ski area, the Rocky Mountain Region has a storied history of developing recreation opportunities. From the prairies to the peaks and plateaus, the Region spans a diverse landscape that is seen and experienced in every season of the year. National, state, and forest scenic byways connect national forests and grasslands with national parks, national monuments, national historic sites, wilderness, wild & scenic rivers and other important outdoor tourism attractions.

- Despite the relatively low population base adjacent to the Region's forests, more local, national, and international visitors enjoy Region's recreation opportunities than any other Forest Service region.
- Partnerships and volunteer projects contribute to strong stewardship connections between local communities and federal lands. The Region continues to set the pace for forging strategic partnerships and providing a broad spectrum of volunteer opportunities that foster land stewardship.

## Visitation vs. Population

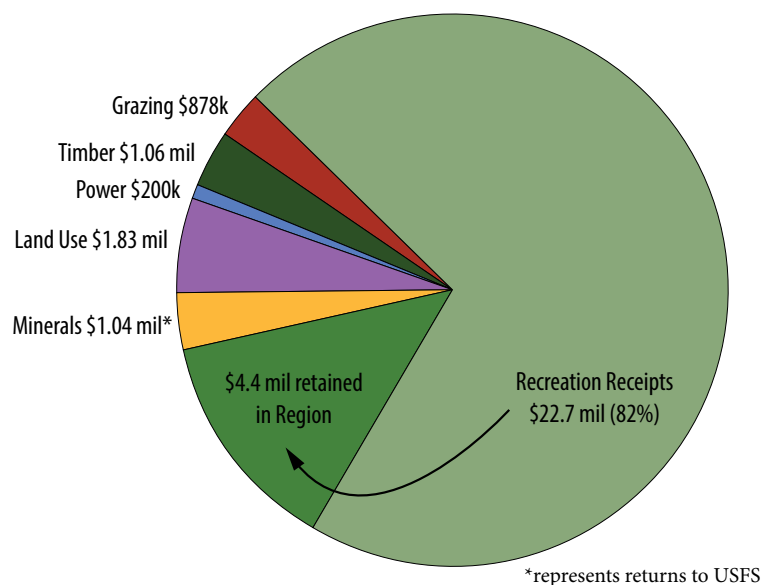


- The Rocky Mountain Region manages a broad range of world renowned recreation resources and services.

- Mountain Resorts - 26 ski areas from Durango to Cody, including Vail, Steamboat and Aspen
- Designated Wilderness - 47 areas for over 4.7 million acres, or one in five acres in the region are designated wilderness
- Recreation Special Uses - 3,240 permits, the most in the agency, including national events such as the USA Pro Challenge, Leadville 100, and Pikes Peak Marathon
- Heritage Sites - Hudson-Meng Bison Kill Education and Research Center, Chimney Rock National Monument and Medicine Wheel/Medicine Mountain National Historic Landmark
- National Forest System trails - 17,431 miles overall, including the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, Colorado Trail, and the Nez Perce National Historic Trail
- Colorado "14er" peak ascents - 49 peaks over 14,000 feet including the highest peak in Colorado, Mt. Elbert at 14,433 feet above sea level

- Within the Region, the outdoor recreation industry is closely connected with national forest and grassland opportunities and resources. In the 2013 Outdoor Industry Association report, the outdoor economy of the states in the Region generated \$27.1 billion annually in direct recreation consumer spending and travel revenue that supports 293,000 jobs in the region. Recreation fee revenue topped \$22.7 million in 2013, with \$4.4 million being retained at the Region's forests and grasslands.

## Region's National Forest Funds Receipts 2013



Forest Service Photo, circa 1960's



## WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Recreation use and management across the public lands of the Rocky Mountain Region continues to undergo significant changes influenced by demographics, improved technologies, and increased demands for experiences and improved access to these lands. The disparity between agency aspirations, public expectations and the reality of declining capacity for recreation management has created a gap that must be addressed.

Current fiscal realities, evolving demands, and changing demographics has compounded the challenges we face today.

- Increased visitation and demand for services, including healthy lifestyle activities

- Recreation/tourism dependent local and regional economies
- Competition for resources resulting in conflicts between user groups
- Reduced budgets resulting in degraded facilities and a decline in workforce skill base
- Sustaining relevance with an increasingly urban population

Managing expectations in the face of change requires adaptive management philosophies. It is important that agency managers, visitors and interest groups recognize our need to strategically plan and manage these activities in a sustainable manner. Our traditional recreation planning and management practices are challenged; visitors are already experiencing diminished return on these world-class opportunities.



## VISION/NICHE STATEMENT

### Our Vision ...

The Rocky Mountain Region provides high-quality, sustainable outdoor recreation and heritage tourism opportunities in inspirational forest and grassland settings where people gather together, explore, learn, seek thrills, and experience solitude in a natural setting. Visitors' strong connections to these public lands are the impetus for our mission. Visitor interactions inspire Forest Service employees and partners with a sense of pride and renewed responsibility for sustaining these lands for future generations.



Photo by [www.sharetheexperience.org](http://www.sharetheexperience.org), Mary Stalnaker

### Our Niche ...

The national forests and grasslands of the Rocky Mountain Region contain iconic western landscapes and nationally important historic and natural areas. These are juxtaposed with many other iconic national landmarks that, taken together, comprise major national tourism attractions. These areas complement the active outdoor lifestyle of the Region's residents and provide adventure opportunities for tens of millions of national and international visitors.



Photo by [www.sharetheexperience.org](http://www.sharetheexperience.org), Heidi Reese





## NARROWING THE GAP

In recognition of 100 years of U.S. Forest Service recreation management, the Rocky Mountain Regional Leadership Team established strategic goals for recreation, tourism and cultural experiences in the 21st century. In alignment with the Region's emphasis on public service, our programs will continue to evolve, providing opportunities and connections to natural resources for visitors of all ages and abilities. Over the next three to five years, as identified in the *Framework for Sustainable Recreation*, "renewing body and spirit, inspiring passion for the land" we will adapt and invest in collaborative community relationships while balancing social, environmental and economic conditions. To enhance our rich recreation, heritage and wilderness programs, we must change our traditional "can do" approach to meeting all demands to, instead, strategically match our aspirations with reality that best suits our forests' niches.



Photo by [www.sharetheexperience.org](http://www.sharetheexperience.org), Jack Affleck

### Identity and Relevance:

Recreation continues to be the window through which people form impressions of the agency. We will use strategic partnerships to reach out to youth and urban citizens and provide high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities, while emphasizing our identity and relevance to these visitors.

- Improve agency identity through signs and the built environment
- Improve virtual identity through website and social media
- Emphasize identity through interpretation, information and education
- Support and participate in urban and community connection activities beyond the National Forest System

### Invest in Professional Skills:

The success of our recreation program is directly tied to the development of our workforce.

- Utilize technology to develop skills in business practices, partnership cultivation and management delivery
- Build the capability to manage and support volunteer resources, partnerships, and business alliances
- Develop a recruitment and retention process that builds resource capacity and a diverse workforce that reflects the public we serve
- Expand training opportunities and support a professional certification program such as special use administration, recreation planning principles and business management



Photo by [www.sharetheexperience.org](http://www.sharetheexperience.org), Ed Fullerton



## Adaptation:

We will adapt our facilities and programs for future use and accessibility challenges by investing in sustainable facilities and opportunities, while divesting from non-sustainable services. We must adapt to changing needs by:

- Utilizing and implementing the renewed Recreation Site Analysis process to identify and work toward sustainable facilities.
- Developing a Trails Analysis process to identify and work toward a sustainable trail network.
- Encouraging and leveraging private sector investments for developed facilities that complement and support dispersed recreation activities across the national forests and grasslands.
- Working across jurisdictional boundaries with agencies that provide similar opportunities that complement National Forest System niches.

## Financial Foundation:

Recreation in the Rocky Mountain Region continues to be a key economic driver for local and regional communities. Our traditional way of doing business is no longer sustainable. We cannot rely solely on appropriated funds to provide high-quality opportunities and facilities. We need to shift our thinking to streamline internal processes, implement performance based allocations and develop new opportunities to achieve financial sustainability by:

- Understanding the business implications of our programs and using cost/benefit analysis in our decisions.
- Forging additional strategic alliances with businesses and partners to provide and sustain high-quality recreation experiences.
- Taking full advantage of the suite of authorities such as recreation fee retention, recreation special use permits, volunteer and service agreements, cost recovery and other available authorities.
- Exploring private investment (private/public ventures) opportunities in appropriate locations.

## Citizen Stewardship:

Connecting people with their natural and cultural heritage through recreation will cultivate a new and diverse generation of responsible outdoor recreation enthusiasts and conservation stewards.

- Utilize the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps and explore opportunities with youth and veterans' organizations.
- Ensuring the Forest Service is well represented by volunteers, partners, and concessionaires that reflect the agency's values
- Set up pilot projects to utilize third-party monitoring and data collection
- Incorporate recreation opportunities and ethics in our conservation education program
- Develop and promote user ethic messages such as TreadLightly, Leave No Trace, Stay the Trail and others







Photo by www.sharetheexperience.org, Kristin Keeley



## ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

*We, as leadership stewards for recreation, recognize not only the storied traditions of the past, but also the new innovative opportunities that are changing within the Rocky Mountain Region. As the Rocky Mountain Regional Leadership Team, we embrace and support this Leadership Intent for Outdoor Recreation.*

	Dan Jirón, Regional Forester
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	Brian Ferebee, Deputy Regional Forester
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	Erin Connelly, Forest Supervisor, PSICC
	Dan Dallas, Forest Supervisor, Rio Grande NF
	Kara Chadwick, Forest Supervisor, San Juan NF
	Joe Alexander, Forest Supervisor, Shoshone NF
	Scott Fitzwilliams, Forest Supervisor, White River NF
	Jim Bedwell, Recreation, Lands & Minerals
	Jacque Buchanan, Renewable Resources
	Mary DeAguiro, Engineering
	Valerie Baca, External Affairs
	Debbie Boggess, Regional Budget Officer
	Rick Cooksey, State & Private Forestry
	Willie Thompson, Fire & Aviation Management
	Dan McCusker, Acquisition Management
	Jim Zornes, Strategic Planning
	Florence Navarro, Civil Rights
	Mike Holifield, Resources Information
	Jay Peno, Human Resources Management





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